IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 23, 29, 31, 32, 34, 37, 40, 42, 43, 46, 48, 49, and 50 as set forth below.

A complete listing of all claims in this application is set forth below. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application.

Claims 1-22 (canceled).

23. (Currently amended) An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped ceiling surface, comprising:

a bracket having (i) a first end portion configured to be attached to said sloped ceiling surface, said first end portion defining a first opening, and (ii) a second end portion defining a socket surface, said socket surface defining a second opening;

a retainer including (i) a generally hemispherical body having an outer surface configured to be received by said socket surface, said body defining a first longitudinal axis, and (ii) a sleeve structure having a central bore that defines a second longitudinal axis, wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α, and

a rod supported by said retainer and at least partially positioned within said sleeve structure, said rod extending through said second opening defined in said socket surface,

wherein, when said first end portion of said bracket is attached to said sloped ceiling surface and said outer surface of said body is received by said socket surface, gravity forces said outer surface of said body into contact with said socket surface so that said retainer is maintained within said bracket.

24. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 23, wherein $5.0° < \alpha < 55.0°$.

25. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 24, wherein $25.0° < \alpha < 55.0°$.

26. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 25, wherein $25.0° < \alpha < 35.0°$.

27. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 23, wherein:

said body defines an interior space, and

said sleeve structure is at least partially located within said interior space.

28. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 23, wherein said rod extends entirely through said central bore of said sleeve structure.

29. (Currently amended) ~~The assembly of claim 23,~~ An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped surface, comprising:

a bracket defining a socket surface;

a retainer including (i) a generally hemispherical body having an outer surface configured to be received by said socket surface, said body defining a first longitudinal axis, and (ii) a sleeve structure having a central bore that defines a second longitudinal axis, wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α,

a rod supported by said retainer and at least partially positioned within said sleeve structure, and

~~further comprising~~ a pin~~, wherein:~~

wherein said rod has defined therein a first hole,

wherein said pin is configured to extend through said first hole, and

wherein said retainer further includes a first receptacle structure located adjacent to said sleeve structure and configured to receive at least a portion of said pin.

30. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 29, wherein:

said body includes a generally circular rim, and

said first receptacle structure is spaced apart from said generally circular rim.

31. (Currently amended) ~~The assembly of claim 23,~~ An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped surface, comprising:

a bracket defining a socket surface;

a retainer including (i) a generally hemispherical body having an outer surface configured to be received by said socket surface, said body defining a first longitudinal axis, and (ii) a sleeve structure having a central bore that defines a second longitudinal axis, wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α,

a rod supported by said retainer and at least partially positioned within said sleeve structure, and

~~further comprising~~ a pin~~, wherein:~~

wherein said rod has defined therein a first hole and a second hole,

wherein said pin is configured to extend through both said first hole and said second hole so as to define a first lateral pin segment and a second lateral pin segment, and

wherein said retainer further includes (i) a first receptacle structure located adjacent to said sleeve structure and configured to receive said first lateral pin segment therein, and (ii) a second receptacle structure also located adjacent to said sleeve structure and configured to receive said second lateral pin segment therein.

32. (Previously presented) ~~The assembly of claim 23, wherein:~~ An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped surface, comprising:

a bracket defining a socket surface;

a retainer including (i) a generally hemispherical body having an outer surface configured to be received by said socket surface, said body defining a first longitudinal axis, and (ii) a sleeve structure having a central bore that defines a second longitudinal axis, wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α, and

a rod supported by said retainer and at least partially positioned within said sleeve structure,

wherein said socket surface of said bracket defines an opening,

wherein said bracket has an alignment member extending into said opening,

wherein said outer surface of said body having defined therein a channel, and

wherein said alignment member is located within said channel.

33. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 32, wherein:

said body includes a generally circular rim, and

said channel intersects said generally circular rim.

34. (Currently amended) An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped ceiling surface, comprising:

a bracket having (i) a first end portion configured to be attached to said sloped ceiling surface, said first end portion defining a first opening, and (ii) a second end portion defining a support surface, said support surface defining a second opening;

a retainer including (i) a body having a convex outer surface positioned in contact with said support surface, said body defining a first longitudinal axis, and (ii) a sleeve structure having a central bore that defines a second longitudinal axis, wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α, and

an elongated support at least partially positioned within said sleeve structure, said elongated support extending through said second opening defined in said support surface,

wherein, when said first end portion of said bracket is attached to said sloped ceiling surface, gravity forces said convex outer surface of said body into contact with said support surface so that said retainer is maintained within said bracket.

35. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 34, wherein $5.0° < \alpha < 55.0°$.

36. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 35, wherein $25.0° < \alpha < 55.0°$.

37. (Currently amended) ~~The assembly of claim 36,~~ An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped surface, comprising:

a bracket defining a support surface;

a retainer including (i) a body having a convex outer surface positioned in contact with said support surface, said body defining a first longitudinal axis, and (ii) a sleeve structure having a central bore that defines a second longitudinal axis, wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α, and

an elongated support at least partially positioned within said sleeve structure,

wherein $25.0° < \alpha < 35.0°$.

38. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 34, wherein:

said body defines an interior space, and

said sleeve structure is at least partially located within said interior space.

39. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 34, wherein said elongated support member extends entirely through said central bore of said sleeve structure.

40. (Previously presented) ~~The assembly of claim 34,~~ An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped surface, comprising:

a bracket defining a support surface;

a retainer including (i) a body having a convex outer surface positioned in contact with said support surface, said body defining a first longitudinal axis, and (ii) a sleeve structure having a central bore that defines a second longitudinal axis, wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α,

an elongated support at least partially positioned within said sleeve structure; and

~~further comprising~~ a pin, wherein:

wherein said elongated support ~~structure~~ has defined therein a first hole,

wherein said pin is configured to extend through said first hole, and

wherein said retainer further includes a first receptacle structure located adjacent to said sleeve structure and configured to receive at least a portion of said pin.

41. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 40, wherein:

said body includes a generally circular rim, and

said first receptacle structure is spaced apart from said generally circular rim.

42. (Currently amended) ~~The assembly of claim 34,~~ An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped surface, comprising:

a bracket defining a support surface;

a retainer including (i) a body having a convex outer surface positioned in contact with said support surface, said body defining a first longitudinal axis, and (ii) a sleeve structure having a central bore that defines a second longitudinal axis, wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α,

an elongated support at least partially positioned within said sleeve structure; and

~~further comprising~~ a pin, ~~wherein:~~

wherein said elongated support has defined therein a first hole and a second hole,

wherein said pin is configured to extend through both said first hole and said second hole so as to define a first lateral pin segment and a second lateral pin segment, and

wherein said retainer further includes (i) a first receptacle structure located adjacent to said sleeve structure and configured to receive said first lateral pin segment therein, and (ii) a second receptacle structure also located adjacent to said sleeve structure and configured to receive said second lateral pin segment therein.

43. (Currently amended) ~~The assembly of claim 34, wherein:~~ An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped surface, comprising:

a bracket defining a support surface;

a retainer including (i) a body having a convex outer surface positioned in contact with said support surface, said body defining a first longitudinal axis, and (ii) a sleeve structure having a central bore that defines a second longitudinal axis, wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α, and

an elongated support at least partially positioned within said sleeve structure,

wherein said support surface of said bracket defines an opening,

wherein said bracket has an alignment member extending into said opening,

wherein said outer surface of said body having defined therein a channel, and

wherein said alignment member is located within said channel.

44. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 43, wherein:

said body includes a generally circular rim, and

said channel intersects said generally circular rim.

45. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 34, wherein said body possesses a generally hemispherical shape.

46. (Currently amended) An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped ceiling surface, comprising:

a bracket having (i) a first end portion configured to be attached to said sloped ceiling surface, said first end portion defining a first opening, and (ii) a second end portion defining a support surface, said support surface defining a second opening;

a retainer including a generally cup-shaped body having an outer surface positioned in contact with said support surface; and

an elongated support attached to said retainer, said elongated support extending through said second opening defined in said support surface,

wherein said body defines a first longitudinal axis,

wherein said body further defines a bore for receiving said elongated support within an interior space of said body,

wherein said bore defines a second longitudinal axis; ~~and~~

wherein said elongated support extends through said bore,

wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α, and

wherein, when said first end portion of said bracket is attached to said sloped ceiling surface, gravity forces said outer surface of said body into contact with said support surface so that said retainer is maintained within said bracket.

47. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 46, wherein $5.0° < \alpha < 55.0°$.

48. (Currently amended) ~~The assembly of claim 47,~~ An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped surface, comprising:

a bracket defining a support surface;

a retainer including a generally cup-shaped body having an outer surface positioned in contact with said support surface; and

an elongated support attached to said retainer,

wherein said body defines a first longitudinal axis,

wherein said body further defines a bore for receiving said elongated support within an interior space of said body,

wherein said bore defines a second longitudinal axis,

wherein said elongated support extends through said bore, and

wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α,

wherein $25.0° < \alpha < 35.0°$.

49. (Currently amended) ~~The assembly of claim 46,~~ An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped surface, comprising:

a bracket defining a support surface;

a retainer including a generally cup-shaped body having an outer surface positioned in contact with said support surface; and

an elongated support attached to said retainer,

wherein said body defines a first longitudinal axis,

wherein said body further defines a bore for receiving said elongated support within an interior space of said body,

wherein said bore defines a second longitudinal axis,

wherein said elongated support extends through said bore, and

wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α,

further comprising a pin, ~~wherein:~~

wherein said elongated support has defined therein a first hole and a second hole,

wherein said pin is configured to extend through both said first hole and said second hole so as to define a first lateral pin segment and a second lateral pin segment, and

wherein said retainer further includes (i) a first receptacle structure located adjacent to said bore and configured to receive said first lateral pin segment therein, and (ii) a second receptacle structure also located adjacent to said bore and configured to receive said second lateral pin segment therein.

50. (Currently amended) ~~The assembly of claim 46, wherein:~~ An assembly for suspending an object from a sloped surface, comprising:

a bracket defining a support surface;

a retainer including a generally cup-shaped body having an outer surface positioned in contact with said support surface; and

an elongated support attached to said retainer,

wherein said body defines a first longitudinal axis,

wherein said body further defines a bore for receiving said elongated support within an interior space of said body,

wherein said bore defines a second longitudinal axis,

wherein said elongated support extends through said bore, and

wherein said first longitudinal axis and said second longitudinal axis define an oblique angle α,

wherein said support surface of said bracket defines an opening,

wherein said bracket has an alignment member extending into said opening,

wherein said outer surface of said body having defined therein a channel, and

wherein said alignment member is located within said channel.

51. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 50, wherein:

said body includes a generally circular rim, and

said channel intersects said generally circular rim.

52. (Previously presented) The assembly of claim 46, wherein said body possesses a generally hemispherical shape.